The Medals and Tokens

—OF—

Henry Clay

An Address

By THOMAS L. ELDER

Delivered before the American Numismatic Society, January Meeting, 1918

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The precepts, character and life of that distinguished and picturesque statesman, Henry Clay, find ample expression on the many medals and tokens issued in his honor covering the periods during which he was a candidate for the Presidency of the United States. Those phrases and inscriptions do not convey their full meaning to the collector or layman unless he is familiar with the life and acts of the man himself and with the history of the times in which he lived. With such a subject as Henry Clay we have a good deal to consider in a single address, and the biographical and historical sketch I am about to give can only be an outline of some of the more important events of his life and times. The question as to how a man of such importance could have been overlooked for the Presidency I have several times heard asked, but not answered. How a man with over half a century of prominence, during which time he had occupied almost every honorable position except the Presidential chair, could have missed the crowning ambition of his life, I am going to attempt to make clear this evening.

It was in Hanover county, Virginia, on April 12th, 1777, in a neighborhood mentioned on the tokens, "The Slashes," that Henry Clay was born; and the year 1777 was known along the southwestern border as "the bloody year of the three sevens." The territory in Kentucky where he early removed to was known in Indian fighting days as "the Dark and Bloody Ground." His father, a Baptist clergyman, was a man of standing and character, while his mother was a daughter of George Hudson, of Hanover county, and said to have been a woman of exemplary character and of much public spirit. Clay's life does not seem to have been filled with so many hardships as Lincoln's, and his forefathers had more social standing and a little more means. Henry was the fifth of seven children, and received only a common school education at the "School-house of the Slashes," a small log-cabin affair, presided over by an Englishman named Peter Deacon. This teacher had an uncertain past and was given to hard drinking, so he was not a very good model for Clay to imitate. While not at school Henry worked for the support of the family, and he was often seen walking barefoot behind the plow, or riding a pony to Daricott's Mill on the Pamunkey River, using a rope for a bridle, and a bag filled with wheat or corn or flour as a saddle. We token collectors have seen him thus pictured on the little brass token showing "The Mill Boy of the Slashes." On this token Daricott's Mill with its wheel appears, the scene being shown in crude style. It was by these trips to the mill that Clay got the nickname of "The Mill Boy of the Slashes." His mother married a second time, her second husband being Captain Henry Watkins, of Richmond. The Captain placed young Henry at 14 as a "boy behind the counter" in a small retail store kept by Richard Denny in Richmond, Va. There Henry gave himself for one year to drawing molasses, measuring tape and selling various goods, while he devoted his small spare time to the study of books. Soon afterwards he was placed in the office of the clerk of the High Court of Chancery.

Roland Thomas, the senior clerk of the office, has given us an interesting account of Clay's appearance as a boy in his new position. He was a raw-boned, lank, awkward youth, with a countenance by no means handsome, yet not unpleasing. His garments of figinny cloth were home-made and ill-fitting, and his linen, which the good mother had starched for the occasion to unusual stiffness, made him look peculiarly strange and uncomfortable. With great uneasiness of manner he took his place at the desk where he was to begin copying letters, while his companions could

not help tittering at his uncouth appearance and his blushing confusion. But they soon turned to like him, and it turned out that he could talk uncommonly well when he venured to do so, and he proved himself the brightest and most studious young man among them. He continued to read books after business hours while most of his companions gave themselves up to the pleasures of the town. Henry Clay found a wise and noble helper in Chancellor George Wythe, one of the most distinguished men of the time. Wythe received his education in William and Mary College. He was a signer of the Declaration of Independence and aided Jefferson in revising the laws of Virginia. Jefferson and John Marshall had been students of law in his office. As the Chancellor's amanuensis for four years, Clay had an excellent opportunity to study law, and his mind was made up to pursue that calling. He entered the office of Robert Brooke, the Attorney-General of Virginia, as a law student, spent about one year with him, and obtained his license to practice law. Richmond at the time was the social centre of Virginia and contained a population of 5000, so Clay made many interesting acquaintances. But feeling he needed more in life than social pleasures, he decided to remove to Kentucky, following his mother and step-father to the border town of Lexington. So that at a very early age his opportunities for careful and thorough study were ended. Of deep learning he had a very limited amount. He was not the finished scholar, college-bred. He had depended more on the occasional gathering of miscellaneous information, and his equipment for the large tasks ahead of him was very poor. A certain superficiality thus remained with him throughout life. It was his one weak point. His learning thereafter was in the larger school of experience. His natural talents were so great, however, that his genius made up for the shortcomings.

Kentucky in 1797, the year he arrived there, was far different from Richmond. Only a few years before the pioneers had floated down the Ohio River on flat-boats and made the first settlements at Marietta and on the present site of Cincinnati. Daniel Boone, who entered this region in 1769, saw vast herds of buffalo, the exact counterpart of the animal on our present buffalo nickel, feeding in its valleys and wading its rivers. Only half a dozen years before Clay arrived there the locality was still earning its name of the "Dark and Bloody Ground" on account of numerous Indian depredations, border fights and hairbreadth escapes. The population was eomposed largely of hunters, trappers and pioneer farmers. Many of these men were of fearless, reckless disposition, who loved the wilderness and loneliness of the frontier. The sound of the mountain torrents, the crash of thunder and flash of lightning in its native forests and valleys were music to their ears. Ten years after Daniel Boone's first settlement there, Kentucky was said to contain less than 200 white inhabitants; but when Henry Clay arrived the number had rapidly increased to about 180,000 persons. No part of the country could relate more thrilling stories and traditions of perilous adventures and bloody fights. For more than a generation the hunting shirt, leggins and mocassins of deerskin, the long rifle ("la longue carabine"), coon-skin cap and hunting knife formed the principal outfit of the male Kentuckians. At Lexington Clay's new home town, a desire for culture on the part of a few resulted in the establishment of a ladies' seminary in 1788, in strange contrast to the crudeness and wildness of the surrounding life. It was to such a section that Henry Clay went to practice law. Lexington, although dignified as a "college town," had little in common with the sedate college towns of New England. Many years later, in 1815, Amos Kendall, who had drifted to Lexington in pursuit of employment and was at the time a private tutor in Henry Clay's family, wrote in his diary: "I have, I think, learned the way to be popular in Kentucky, but do not as yet put it into practice. Drink whiskey and talk loud, with the fullest confidence, and you will hardly fail of being called a clever fellow."

When Clay arrived in Kentucky the hunter in buckskin coat and leggins, with long rifle and powder horn, was still a familiar sight on the streets. The boisterous hilarity of the saloon and gaming table were very popular

in that region, and a racing horse interested Kentuckians better than a lecture on Greek art or parlor manners. Oddly enough, Clay seemed to find this sort of life congenial, and he immediately became very popular there. Shortly after he arrived he joined a debating club, at several meetings of which he was a silent listener. At one meeting, after the debate was over, Clay ventured to remark that he did not think the speakers had exhausted their subject. He was asked to speak. His nerves were somewhat shaky at first, but he regained his confidence and poured out a flow of reasoning that astonished his hearers. After he had reached old age he used to speak of his early beginnings in Kentucky, of these debates and his scant income. Said he, "I remember how comfortable I thought I should be if I could make one hundred pounds a year, Virginia money, and with what delight I received the first fifteen shillings fee." He evidently referred to the Virginia paper money, with which collectors are familiar. In 1803 Aaron Burr passed through Lexington, where he was arrested on a charge of being engaged in an unlawful enterprise, dangerous to the peace of the United States. He engaged Clay, who obtained his release by his deceiving Clay as to his real intentions. Afterwards in New York, when Burr offered him his hand, he refused it. Clay's progress as a lawyer continued and he became noted in criminal cases. Usually he won his case, no difference how bad his client's case was. It is said that no murderer ever defended by Henry Clay was sentenced to death. To one of these he said once, "Ah, Willis, poor fellow, I fear I have saved too many like you who ought to be hanged." Clay seems to have originated the "brain-storm theory." A Mrs. Phelps, a farmer's wife, in a fit of angry passion, had killed her sister-in-law with a musket. Clay used "temporary delirium" as a ground of defense. The jury, with some confusion of judgment, found that the accused was just insane enough not to be hung, but not insane enough to be left off without a term in jail.

Clay's time was occupied with other things besides his practice. He was fond of company, and did not always select the best, and he had a love for cards from which he never completely recovered. In 1799 he married Lucretia Hart, the daughter of a very prominent citizen. His prosperity increased, so he was enabled to buy the noted residence called "Ashland," so often mentioned on the tokens, and from which he wrote so many campaign and other letters to his friends. Later in politics he became known as "The Farmer of Ashland." Clay was tall in stature and had a pleasing face, a wonderful voice and expression which seemed to change to suit any occasion. According to the custom, he wore his hair very long, giving him an odd effect. He had a never-failing courtesy, a cheery, sympahtetic nature, was gay, spirited, and always ready to enjoy and to see others enjoy themselves. Knowing these things, we do not wonder at his popularity. The people of Kentucky took him to their hearts and never lost their affection for him during the many long years of trial and strife which followed. Clay took such an active part in the country's law-making, wars and treaties that it is quite out of the question to go deeply into them in this address, but I would like to briefly sketch some of them. Clay's honors were not only entirely due to his own efforts, but they commenced quite early in life. The year 1803 found him elected to the Kentucky Legislature, and that State sent him to the United States Senate in 1806, before he was thirty years old. In 1814 he was selected, with Albert Gallatin, John Quincy Adams and others equally noted, as one of the Ghent Peace Commission to Great Britain; 1815 found him Speaker of the House, and in 1817 he was re-elected to that office. In 1818 he advocated the recognition of the independence of the Spanish-American colonies, then in a state of revolution. Later he drafted an important bill to regulate trade and intercourse with the Indian tribes. It was in this year that the life-long feud between Clay and Andrew Jackson commenced, when Clay criticised the execution of Arbuthnot and Ambrister, by Jackson's orders. In 1823 Clay was elected to Congress and again chosen Speaker. His friends placed his name before the convention for the Presidential nomination in 1824, but there were a number of competitors in the field, and John Quincy Adams

was finally nominated, and received Clay's support. Jackson, the Democratic candidate, was defeated, it is said, largely through Clay's speech-making and assistance to Adams. Adams then appointed Clay his Secretary of State. During this period he negotiated treaties with Prussia, the Hanseatic Republics, Denmark, Colombia, Central America, Austria and Great Britain.

In 1824 it was Clay's privilege to welcome the great hero, the Marquis de Lafayette, to the House of Representatives. It was a solemn and touching scene, and Clay delivered an address full of feeling. With delicacy he seized upon the poetic side of Lafayette's visit, saying: "The vain wish has been sometimes indulged that Providence would allow the patriot, after death, to return to his country, and to contemplate the intermediate changes which had taken place, to view the forests felled, the cities built, the mountains leveled, the canals cut, the highways constructed, the progress of the arts, the advancement of learning, and the increase in the population. General, your present visit to the United States is a realization of the consoling object of that wish. You are in the midst of posterity." Clay and Lafayette had long been friends and correspondents. The old soldier had been completely won by the brilliant and frank Clay, and he was repeatedly heard to speak of Clay as the man whom he most wished to see made President of the United States.

On March 25th, 1825, the House thanked Clay by resolution for the "able, impartial and dignified manner in which he had presided over its deliberations." His biographers state that Clay stands in the traditions of the House as the greatest of its Speakers. He was a past master of parliamentary law. Even his bitter enemies felt obliged to give their assent to this resolution. Clay got into an argument with John Randolph of Virginia in 1825, and Randolph called him a "blackleg." A duel promptly resulted. They exchanged shots, both missed. Only Randolph's coat was touched. At the second shot Clay put another bullet through Randolph's coat, but Randolph emptied his pistol into the air, exclaiming, "I do not fire at you, Mr. Clay." Thereupon they shook hands and forgot their enmity.

Toward the close of his term as Secretary of State Adams offered him the honorable position of Judge of the Supreme Court, but this Clay declined. After the close of Adams' administrative duties he made an address in which he lauded Clay: "Let any man who questions my motives in appointing Clay as Secretary of State select and name the man whom, by his pre-eminent talents, by his splendid services, by his ardent patriotism, by his all-embracing public spirit, by his fervid eloquence in behalf of the rights and liberties of mankind, by his long experience in the affairs of the Union, foreign and domestic, a President of the United States, intent only upon the honor and welfare of the country, ought to have preferred to Henry Clay." Soon afterward Clay was elected President of the American Colonization Society to colonize free negroes in Africa.

In 1832 Clay was again a candidate for President. He had been nominated by the National Republican party on December 12th, 1831, at Baltimore, and John Sergeant of Pennsylvania was named for Vice-President, and the issues in the forthcoming campaign were outlined. Jackson must be defeated if the Bank of the United States was to be saved. The tariff also was put forward by both parties for adjustment. Clay insisted in confining the reduction to duties on articles not coming into competition with American products. In 1832 the bill passed both houses to recharter the U. S. Bank, but Jackson vetoed it in bitter terms, leaving with his veto a capital campaign document. No more powerful stump speech was ever delivered. It exhibited the bank as a most odious monopoly granted to favored individuals without any fair equivalent; a monopoly exercising despotic sway over the business of the country; a monopoly giving dangerous advantages to foreigners as stockholders; a monopoly which would put millions into the pockets of a few men; a monopoly tending to make the rich richer and the poor poorer." In arguing against the reissue of its charter Jackson used a bitter pill to Clay by simply repeating

Clay's former argument, used in 1811, when he himself was opposed to the bank's charter. The result of this veto on the Senate was a flow of oratory, Webster, Clay, Ewing and Clayton thundering magnificently against the veto and its author. Notwithstanding the great work and speeches in favor of the bank and charter, the election of the same year was a great disappointment to the Clay following. Of the 288 electoral votes Jackson had won 219 and Clay only 49—those of Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Maryland, Delaware and Kentucky. The South was violently against the tariff, while Clay was for it, and his continual refusal to compromise any question relating to the U. S. Bank charter clearly outlined the issues, but the great popular hero Jackson won with the masses, and his victory was overwhelming.

The Presidential election of 1836 did not see Jackson a candidate, but so powerful was his influence that the candidate he favored—Van Buren—won the election against Harrison. Then followed the great bank panic in 1837, with which all collectors are familiar, and which found a commentary in a multitude of token issues and cards.

The country had shown important growth. Many state banks were established, and their capital rose from $61,000,000 in 1830 to $525,000,000 in 1837. There was a mania for establishing banks. Public land sales was a great question. Speculation was rife; the country seems to have gone wild over it. A flood of paper money appeared. As Clay said at a late period, "It expressed the distrust of the Executive in the solvency of the banks, and created an extraordinary demand for specie." There was a loud cry for the withdrawal of the specie circular. As Webster described it, "The specie circular checked the use of bank notes in the West and made another loud call for specie." Before April 3rd came a general collapse. First, the influx of capital from Europe stopped. Discounts went up and prices down. English creditors called in their dues. The cotton houses in the South went down. Nine-tenths of the merchants in Mobile suspended. New Orleans was in a state of financial anarchy. Stocks of all kinds dropped with a thump. Tens of thousands of workingmen were thrown out of employment and onto the streets. Bankruptcies were announced by the scores and hundreds. Everybody was in debt, and there was a great scarcity of available assets. The Dry Dock Bank, one of the deposit banks, failed. Runs on other banks followed, and on May 10th New York banks in a body suspended specie payments. Confusion and distress were general. Jackson went out of office before the crash came and was sent on his homeward way in a halo of glory. The old U. S. Bank continued to exist under a charter from the State of Pennsylvania, and a new U. S. Bank was the panacea offered by both Clay and Webster. Nicholas Biddle, who had resigned from the presidency of the bank in March, 1839, was prosecuted for conspiracy. He was acquitted, and died in 1844, poor and broken-hearted. Van Buren had hardly come into office in 1837 when Henry Clay was mentioned for a Presidential candidate in 1840. At the Harrisburg (Pa.) convention Clay was defeated for the nomination. The selection was referred to a committee of three, who were to confer with each delegation as to candidates. Nothing could excel the audacity with which this convention was managed by a few politicians to ensure Clay's defeat. On the first ballot Clay secured 102 votes, Harrison 91 and Scott 57. After several decoctions and filtrations in secret, a majority for Harrison was found. Harrison was elected by 234 electoral votes against 60 for Van Buren. The Whigs were delirious with delight and hailed the victory as the greatest event of the time. In spite of his disappointment Clay had supported Harrison with energy, and made many speeches in the name of the log-cabin and cider-barrel campaign. After the election of Harrison offered Clay the office of Secretary of State, but Clay declined it. In 1841 Clay was recognized as the leader of the Whig party. He moved the repeal of the sub-treasury act and drove it through both houses. He then brought up a bill providing for a new Bank of the United States. President Tyler, who became President after Harrison's death, vetoed it. Clay denounced Tyler for what he said was faithlessness to Whig principles. The Whig party rallied to Clay.

With all Clay's brilliance, experience and accomplishments as a statesman he had many bitter enemies who worked havoc with his Presidential prospects. The Democrats fought most of his bills—and they were many. Even Tyler, elected on the Whig ticket, became his opponent and vetoed some of his measures after they had passed the Whig House. Clay's ability over Harrison, Tyler, and even Andrew Jackson, was very marked in many respects. Another drawback to Clay was he had not been a military hero, and popular military heroes had the call. In the picking of candidates Clay was shelved several times, the last campaign being a concrete example. This was due in some cases to the machinations of small politicians. It must have been a bitter pill to Clay to have been put aside for such a lightweight as William H. Harrison. In these times the money question was the greatest question. Until 1841, when Tyler vetoed Clay's bill to recharter the U. S. Bank, the bank issue had been the subject dearest to Clay's heart, but after this defeat the scheme for a great U. S. bank never regained vitality again, and in the succeeding campaign the Whigs regarded it as a dead issue.

On March 31st Henry Clay took leave of the U. S. Senate and made one of his most dramatic addresses. The occasion was regarded so memorable that the Senate thereupon adjourned. The Senators pressed around him, bidding him farewell. Clay shook hands with Senators after years of estrangement. "His leaving the Senate was something like the soul's leaving the body," wrote Crittenden. "His departure had an enervating effect." No sooner had Clay left the Senate than he was deluged with requests from all quarters to visit the country. His home, "Ashland," in Kentucky, was made the scene of a great open-air meeting, attended by a large multitude, and many speeches were made by his neighbors. He was compared to Cincinnatus and Washington and called "The Farmer of Ashland," and as a citizen of Kentucky he was said to have caused the State's escutcheon to blaze with immortal brilliance. As early as 1842 his name was brought forth as the candidate of the Whigs for the great and momentous campaign of 1844. This campaign I shall make particular reference to because it was the one which brought forth such a flood of Clay medals and tokens, and was his greatest campaign. In the same year, 1842, he attended, by invitation, a Whig convention at Dayton, Ohio, which was attended by 100,000 people. This attendance gives one some idea of the prominence of politics in those days, because the normal population of Dayton could have been only a few thousand. There he was nominated for President in 1844. At Richmond a Quaker named Mendenhall arose and heckled Clay about abolition. He asked Clay to liberate his slaves and to give his views on slavery. Clay replied with a remarkable speech saying he believed slavery should be gradually abolished, and called it a great evil. His remarks showed he was a prophet, for he spoke of the possibilities of civil war, pillage and carnage arising from this question. He admitted he had 50 slaves, valued at $15,000, and asked Mendenhall if he would contribute that sum to take care of the slaves if they were liberated. Clay's speech was considered important and was published all over the country. But many thousands of objectors to his slave views were to rise against him in 1844, and Mendenhall incidents were important to his future prospects. Tyler strongly favored the annexation of Texas, in spite of the Mexican Government's declaration that it would consider the annexation of Texas by the United States as a declaration of war.

For the Democrats a convention was held. Van Buren expected to be the nominee, but it went to James K. Polk, of Tennessee, while George Dallas, of Pennsylvania, a light-calibre man, was nominated for Vice-President. The Democrats designated the annexation of Texas as the principal issue. Polk had the reputation of being a free-trader, and wrote a letter favoring a protective tariff to propitiate some Pennsylvanians, where the cry was raised, "Polk and Dallas and the Tariff of 1842." This Democratic convention was remarkable as being the first to report its proceedings by electric telegraph, the line having just been completed between Baltimore and Washington. The Democrats even had the audacity to use as a war

cry, "Protection to American Industry," and the people were asked to vote against Clay as the enemy to home industry. This was one of the most daring frauds ever perpetrated in our political history. Yet this deception and lie was carried through the campaign successfully for several months and cost Clay the votes of Pennsylvania. By way of irony, the Polk Democrats would thus repeal the tariff of 1842, which Clay and the Whigs vainly struggled to maintain. Clay had other deadly enemies. The old Hero of New Orleans, Andrew Jackson, on the very brink of the grave, sounded a note of warning to his friends against his most-hated enemy. He wrote a letter expressing the belief that Clay and Adams had by bargain and corruption defeated him of his right to the Presidency in 1825. The Liberty or Abolitionist party also attacked Clay as a slave-holder and gambler. Polk, also, they designated as a slave-holder. The Liberty party desired also to strengthen their organization for future action through support from the Whigs, so tried to win Whig votes from the candidates, and succeeded.

In this notable 1844 campaign the U. S. Bank question having been dropped, the other important Clay issues were brought forward. Clay had offered a resolution recommending that the members should wear only clothes that were manufactured by home manufacturers. This was the first demonstration in the way of the "encouragement of home industries," hence here originated the well-worn phrase of the different political parties and candidates. About this resolution he had a quarrel with Humphrey Marshall, which led to a duel, in which both were slightly wounded. As early as 1824 he had supported a bill which was to protect our industries. The duties proposed were: (1) On articles the importation of which would not interfere with home manufacturers, such as silks, linens, cutlery, spices and some others bringing more revenue duties; and (2) on iron, hemp, glass, lead, wool and woolen goods, cotton goods, etc., these to bring high protective duties. Thus Clay had developed into a full-fledged protectionist, and this policy Clay called "The American System." Token collectors are thus acquainted with the origin of the inscription so often found.

At this time Clay began a sort of triumphal tour of the United States. His receptions at the different towns and cities must have resembled those given Theodore Roosevelt. His admirers showed the same wild enthusiasm toward their idol. Clay then was in his sixty-seventh year, and no longer a young man. Already his career had been long and varied, and filled with remarkable experience and many brilliant achievements. The Democrats were busy also, and there were several battle cries. Mr. E. Gilbert, one of our veteran collectors, lived at Catskill, N. Y., at the time and remembers parading with a torch for Clay and Frelinghuysen. He remembers one campaign cry:

"Hurrah, hurrah, the country is rising
To vote down Clay and Frelinghuysen."

The Whig policies had become somewhat obsolete, and the Texas question loomed a sort of unwelcome subject, fraught with dangerous possibliities. In regard to the tariff and the money questions, the platforms of the two great political conventions seemed to differ very little.

As to that memorable "Baltimore Convention," so often referred to on Clay's medals, it was held on May 1st, 1844. Almost all the notables of the Whig party were in attendance, including the great Daniel Webster. Clay was nominated by acclamation. The motion was carried by a great shout that shook the building. Theodore Frelinghuysen, of New Jersey, was nominated for Vice-President. At this convention Webster made an address praising Clay, his former opponent. Frelinghuysen's influence on the election was doubtful, as he had the reputation of being rabidly anti-Catholic. "The Annexation of Texas" was demanded in a great cry from the South. In South Carolina the slogan was "Texas or Disunion." In the meantime the Tyler administration had concluded a treaty of annexation with Texas. In an elaborate letter, known as "the Raleigh letter,"

Clay declared himself against this policy, mainly because it would surely bring on war with Mexico, and because it compromised the national character. At this junction Clay made the greatest mistake of his political life. Yielding to the entreaties of Southern Whigs who feared his declaration against the annexation of Texas might injure his prospects in the South, he wrote another letter, this time addressed to Stephen F. Miller, of Tuscaloosa, Ala., in which he said, "Far from having any personal objection to the annexation of Texas, I would be glad to see it without dishonor, without war, with the common consent of the Union, upon fair terms." This letter turned against him many of the abolitionists in the North, and their candidate, James G. Birney, nominated at Buffalo, gained many votes. It is believed this act of Clay cost him the election.

The impression created by the Raleigh and Alabama letters, written by Clay, was bad. Birney, the Abolitionist candidate, did not poll a large vote, but it lost Clay New York, which was enough to turn the scale against Clay. Polk carried New York by a majority of 5080 votes. The Birney candidates received 15,812 votes. It was charged, also, that the Democrats in New York perpetrated great election frauds (a charge not unheard of nowadays in that State). Had Clay received the anti-slavery vote he would have won New York, and with it the election, and thus would have realized the fond dream of his life—to be President of the United States. "The abolition vote lost you the election," wrote Ambrose Spencer, of New York, as "three-fourths of the votes there were cast by Whigs converted into Abolitionists." A well-known biographer says: "The object of Clay's highest ambition escaped him because at the decisive moment he was not true to himself." Everything hung on New York. Returns came in slowly. The suspense was awful to the Whigs. The descriptions of the grief of the defeated were almost unbelievable. Tears flowed from the eyes of many men and women. In the cities and villages business was given up for a day or so. There was a feeling that a great wrong had been done. Many despaired of the Republic. Clay was in a gloomy state of mind. "The great blow that has fallen on the country is very heavy," he wrote to a friend. "It will be long, if ever the people recover from the corrupting influence of Jacksonism."

This defeat was not his only sorrow. He suffered financial reverses at this time, while his outlays as a public man were very large. One of his sons got into financial difficulties, and at the age of 67 he found himself defeated with a heavy mortgage resting on Ashland, his Kentucky home. A strange relief suddenly reached him. While at his local bank at Lexington the president of the institution informed him that sums of money were continually arriving from different parts of the country to pay off Henry Clay's debts and that all notes and mortgages were cancelled. Clay, deeply touched, said: "Who did this?" All the answer he got was the givers were unknown, but they presumably were not his enemies. Clay doubted if he could accept these gifts, and consulted his friends about the matter, and finally he agreed to accept them, since he could not return gifts when the donors were unknown.

Soon after important events transpired. Congress passed the Texas annexation act, and war ensued between the United States and Mexico. The Whigs openly denounced the war, calling it "Polk's War." Clay denounced it as having been caused by the annexation of Texas. His speeches and resolutions found a response in New York, where great meetings were held at the Tabernacle and at Castle Garden, where the people, a good many of whom had voted against him at the last election, praised him to the skies. He was spoken of again as a possibility for Presidential timber in 1848. Indeed, we have several medals of his dated 1848, one of them bearing the well known saying, "I would rather be right than President." But it seemed that, like the thrice-nominated William Jennings Bryan, he had grown stale as a candidate. Even Kentucky gave symptoms of doubt as to his availablity to run again. So, Zachary Taylor, fresh from his victories at Palo Alto and Resaca de la Palma, and the life-long friend of Clay, was nominated by the Whigs. Clay's popularity from a personal stand-

point had not waned. At Baltimore, Philadelphia and New York he was received with great demonstrations of enthusiasm and regard. There was no end of handshaking and cheers for him. Finally he wrote a letter, at his supporters' solicitation, allowing his name to be presented to the convention. But, contrary to his expectation, Taylor refused to withdraw from the field. At the Whig convention, which met on June 7th, Taylor received 171 votes and Clay only 32 on the fourth ballot. Clay was mortified, for some of his friends had deceived him.

In December, 1849, Clay arrived at Washington to take his seat in the United States Senate. The slavery question was then uppermost. There he found a noted array of associates with great names, including Calhoun, Webster, Sam Houston, Jefferson Davis, Lewis Cass, Stephen A. Douglas, Hannibal Hamlin, John P. Hale, William H. Seward and Salmon P. Chase. Clay's opinion was that the Union, being threatened with disunion on account of the slave questions, should be saved by some compromise. The admission of new States always brought forth the important question as to whether slavery would be permitted within their borders or not. Clay's greatest speeches were made during this period. To the North he appealed for concession; to the South for peace. Calhoun, Seward and Webster also made notable speeches on this subject. Strange to say, Webster excused slavery in Texas. Clay had exhausted himself for many long days by speechmaking, using his greatest efforts to preserve the Union.

For his almost superhuman efforts in pacifying the different factions during the great Missouri Compromise issue he was rewarded just before his death by seeing his solution being accepted by both of the great parties as the final settlement of the slavery question. Thus he undoubtedly was most instrumental in postponing the great Civil War for ten years at least. He was after this called "The Great Pacificator." Happily he did not survive to see that the slavery question had only smouldered and was to break out again with redoubled fury. Jefferson regarded the Missouri Compromise as the most important question of the time. Said he, "In the gloomiest moments of the Revolution I had never any apprehension equal to that I feel from this source."

Webster excelled Clay in breadth of knowledge and in purity of diction, but Clay was the far greater orator. Webster could instruct and convince, but Clay could overcome his audience. As a leader he was superior to Webster, as well as of all other contemporaries, excepting possibly Andrew Jackson. In no sense was he a money-maker in politics, and his integrity was unsullied throughout his career in public life. In his private affairs he bore the same spotless reputation. In money matters he was always a man of honor, with the principles of a gentleman. His habits were slightly convivial, and he was of singularly winning address. He was a cautious leader, but was a splendid party chief, idolized by his followers. He was actuated in all he did by a lofty national spirit, and was intensely proud of his country and ardently devoted to the Union. His last public utterance, while a member of the U. S. Senate in 1851, was a short speech addressed to Louis Kossuth, who visited him in his room, deprecating the entaglement of the United States in the complication of European affairs. He had one son, Henry, who was an officer in the Mexican war and was killed at the battle of Buena Vista; another son, James Brown, was born in 1817 and died in Montreal, Canada in 1864.

Henry Clay is buried in the cemetery at Lexington, Ky., and a tall monument surmounted by his statue was erected over his tomb. Through the life, acts and influence of Henry Clay we collectors have been left a rich heritage in Clay medals, and a more direct reference to them is in order.

Nine months before his death, in 1852, he himself made some suggestions as to an inscription to be put on a large gold medal by C. C. Wright, which his friends in New York caused to be struck in commemoration of his public services. The following is the inscription furnished by Clay himself:

Senate, 1806.
Speaker, 1811.

War with Great Britain, Ghent, 1814.
Spanish-America, 1822.
Missouri Compromise, 1821.
American System, 1824.
Greece, 1824.
Secretary of State, 1825.
Panama Instructions, 1826.
Tariff Compromise, 1833.
Public Domain, 1833-41.
Peace with France Preserved, 1835.
Compromise, 1850.

These were the events in his career which Clay most desired to be remembered. It is curious that the longest and most bitter of his political efforts, that for the Bank of the United States against Jackson, could not be mentioned in the list of his services; nor his efforts to be made President of the United States.

After Clay's death this noted medallic portrait was copied in reduced size. On the reverse the hand of Clay points to a scroll on a solid rock, bearing the word "Constitution," the scroll inscribed "American System," "Compromises," etc., with the legend, "The Eloquent Defender of National Rights and National Independence." We know this was struck after his death because it bears the dates of birth and death. I possess this medal in black rubber, which may possibly be unique in this material. The political medals and tokens issued during the period covered from 1820 to 1850, for candidates from Andrew Jackson to James K. Polk, offer a wide variety and an interesting field for study, with an almost unlimited number of metals, die and type varieties and grades of workmanship. They were unmistakably signs of the times, reflecting with fidelity the widest range of political views and opinions. They attest also that politics was the greatest question which covered a very long period of our national history. Clay had lived long. No other statesman had been so long prominently before the public eye. He had witnessed every step in our progress from the stage coach and canal boat to the invention of steam navigation, the entry of the railroad train and the discovery of the telegraph. With an almost unbroken forest west of Indiana, and with agriculture hardly commenced, the country was, notwithstanding these few great inventions, still in a formative and crude state. So the public turned its eyes to politics. It was the great business of the age. The medals and tokens themselves were issued by the party organizations, by political supporters or by personal friends of the candidates. We know that in one or more instances the wording of the pieces was suggested by the candidates themselves. The inscriptions show that the politicians of the time knew the political game thoroughly, indulging in the blandest and loftiest phrases of adulation when describing the virtues of their candidates. The military heroes naturally took first rank over the civilians. Jackson was "the Gallant and Successful Defender," or "the Hero of New Orleans"; Harrison was the "Hero of Tippecanoe," Taylor was "The Hero of Palo Alto." They knew how to appeal to the laboring man or to the agriculturist, and to win with the former Clay was going to give "Protection to the Working Class," as an "assurance of success," while to the hardy tillers of the soil he was "The Ashland Farmer" or "The Mill Boy of the Slashes." To captivate the elite and dignified Easterners he was "The Noble and Patriotic Defender of Protection," or "The Originator of the American System." Those politicians knew what they were doing when they inscribed a token to Harrison, "He Leaves the Plow to Save His Country."

Clay lived through the picturesque old days of safe and slow travel. The rickety railroad trains, the snail-paced canal boats were familiar to him and used by him. Besides, those were the good old days of "*free things.*" Our tokens tell us the political leaders promised "Free Soil, Free Homes, Free Trade, Free Speech, Free Press, Free Labor," and so forth. Almost everything was promised except immortality.

No defeated candidate for the Presidency was ever so bemedaled as Henry Clay, and no candidate who was ever elected had so few medals in his honor as Clay's successful rival, James K. Polk. Probably less than a dozen varieties will cover about all the issues to Polk, while Clay's were not less than a hundred and fifty different types or medals. These we find struck in all metals except aluminum, a metal not then discovered. A favorite type also was the button or badge, worn on the neck-tie or coat lapel. These buttons were usually brass gilded, and enclosed a portrait of Clay, and sometimes of Frelinghuysen, also. Of these we have seen a great many varieties, and this class was issued down to the end of Grant's administration. The enthusiasm of Clay partisans was at times almost pathetic. Clay's Whig supporters were so cock-sure of his election that they called him *President* on the tokens, whereas he never was elected President. There are several oddities of this kind in his series. The "Slashes" token is one calling him "President." Some of his medals and tokens are of great rarity, and there are several fine collections here in the city. That of The American Numismatic Society is a fine one and contains about 97 varieties. One of special rarity and interest shows Clay's home at Lexington. I note another which must have been struck prior to the 1844 campaign, since it records events of his life but only down to the year 1825. This possibly was struck for the campaign of 1828 or 1832. Another shows Clay holding a tattered battle-scarred flag of the United States, the reverse having an eagle holding a ribbon in his beak with "Natives," and the legend inscribed is, "Beware of Foreign Influence." Another of similar type bears an eagle trampling symbols of power, such as coronets, sceptres, etc., under foot, and reads, "American Republicans Beware of Foreign Influence." The reverse shows the scales of Justice over the Bunker Hill Monument.

Many varieties of such tokens are seldom met with nowadays, even in the public auction sales. In the good old golden days of token collecting, the days from 1860 to 1876, the sales of Cogan, Woodward and Bangs contained a goodly number of this series, including issues of Jackson, Harrison, Van Buren and Clay. The old Levick, Woodward, McCoy and Betts collections were especially rich in politicals. It is to be regretted that in recent years the collecting of these pieces has been neglected, but there is evidence that the interest is reviving.

Among the die-sinkers and makers of medals and tokens of the period I may mention Wright and Bale, Bale & Smith, C. C. Wright, True, Merriam, Morin, Odling, Leonard, R. Lovett, Sr., Taylor, Thomas, Stimpson and Mitchell. The names of some of the above appear on Clay medals and tokens. The die-cutting was, as a rule, mediocre, excepting examples by C. C. Wright, Bale & Smith, Wright and Bale, and Mitchell. C. C. Wright was the finest American medallist and die-cutter of his time. It is doubtful if he has been excelled in this country since. As a rule, the Clay portraits were crude, and not a few of them positively hideous, mere caricatures. It is fortunate for Clay that he was not always taken at his medallic face value.

Scoville made many of the buttons and badges, and his name often appears. Williston, another large New England button-maker, doubtless contributed to this varied series.

The many tokens with holes at the top were designed to suspend on coat lapels. The small brass medals, the most common of all, were muled with several reverses, some reading "The Farmer of Ashland," others "The Ashland Farmer." The reverses differed also, one reading "The Noble and Patriotic Supporter of Protection," while another read "The Noble and Patriotic Supporter of the People's Rights." Others bore the unbalanced scales with the Democrats "Weighed in the Balance and Found Wanting." Oblong shell portraits had pins attached. We have seen several very rare Whig buttons with Liberty caps on their obverse.

A reference to our medals shows that "Protection," "The Taiff" and "Beware of Foreign Influence" were popular war cries of the Whig party. The frequent animosity to evil foreign influences was well founded in those days, for Clay was born at the height of the American Revolution, and as a young lawyer the memories of the wrongs we had suffered and

the sacrifices we had made in men and money to win our independence were fresh in his mind. He had lived through and had taken a prominent part in the War of 1812-14 and had witnessed the unlawful seizures of men and ships by both France and Great Britain. Added to these experiences were the long and trying experiences he had had to help adjust the difficulties between America and Great Britain at Ghent in 1814. Clay was, first of all, a great American patriot. Well does the medal say of him, "Every End He Aimed at Was His Country's." Had Henry Clay lived to see this great world war he would be found thundering against the barbarian and piratical acts of the German autocracy.

From the fine collection of The American Numismatic Society I have selected 32 different Clay medals, tokens, buttons and pins of special interest and best suited to illustrate my address. These will be thrown upon the screen, and they will be commented upon by myself and by any who may wish to speak about them. Before this is done I wish to strongly emphasize what I said the last time I addressed you in this building, that is, the very urgent need of more books and literature on the subject of American medals and tokens, and especially on our early political tokens. We have Mr. Low's treatise on the Hard Times Tokens, but there is no distinctive work on the issues of Andrew Jackson, Henry Clay, William H. Harrison, Martin Van Buren and others, almost as important medalically. As the years go by these token issues will become more and more important as commentaries on our early political and financial national history. They mark the token beginnings in American numismatics, and to us are even more important than the individuals commemorated. If I were a rich man I would be tempted to endeavor to get a competent man to work on the subject of publication, and let him devote his entire time to it if it took years of effort to complete the task. There is a wealth of European medallic literature, but a dearth of American numismatic literature. We are far behind in this and should speed up at once.

Here is a list of the medals and tokens for our illustrations:

No. 1.

1. Obv., Head left. Rev., "Mill Boy of the Slashes."
2. Bust. Rev., View of his home, Ashland. Pewter.
3. Homely bust to left, no inscription. Rev., Milling and shipping scene.
4. Small, homely bust to right, name. Rev., "A Tariff for Protection."

No. 5.

5. Brass button. Bust r., name, 1845. Rev., "Clay and Frelinghuysen, Protection and Union."

6. Another, somewhat similar, by Scoville in 1845. Bust r., name, date.

No. 7.

7. Very small button with bust, made by Scoville (smallest of all).

8. Oblong badge or pin, bust to left in wreath.

9. Bust to left, "Harry of the West." "The Protector of Home Industry."

10. Homely bust to left, name, date, 1844. Rev., Anchor, "Hope" (in three metals).

11. Bust to l. "For President, 1845." Rev., "Henry Clay Will Carry The Day."

12. Head to left. "The Ashland Farmer." Rev., "The Noble and Patriotic Supporter of Protection." Brass. One of the commonest tokens.

No. 13.

13. Bust to left. "Protection to American Industry." Brass. Rev., Eagle.

14. Bust to l., name, date of birth. "The Farmer of Ashland." Rev., "Nominated by the Baltimore Convention, May 1, 1844."

16. Bust to r. "In Commemoration of the Great Convention Held at Baltimore, May 1, 1844."

17. Bust to r. "Henry Clay and the American System," by I. B. C. "United We Stand." Brass and copper.

18. Togated bust to r., name. "The Union and The Constitution." "The Eloquent Advocate of Protection to Home Industry." Silver.

19. Oval badge. Name. By Thomas.

20. Bust to l., by True, no name. Silver shell, possibly a pattern or trial never used.

21. Bust to l., name. "Protection to American Industry." Brass gilt.

22. Fine bust to left by Mitchell. Rev., "The Flag We Wear at Our Masthead Should Be the Credentials of Our Seamen." Agricultural and other implement of commerce. "The Wealth of a Nation Is Indicated by Its Industry."

23. Same obverse. Rev., Trophies, flags, etc. "Our Country, Right or Wrong."

24. Bust to l., by Merriam, Boston. Memorial medal. "The Eloquent Defender of National Rights, Died June 29, 1852."

25. The most noted Clay medal. Bust to l., by C. C. Wright. Rev., Record of his life and honors accorded him. This record was furnished, at the request of his friends, by himself for this medal.

26. A reduced copy of the last obverse, dates of birth and death, the dies again used after his death. Rev., Hand of Clay holding a scroll over a rock; on the scroll, "American System, Compromises," etc. "The Eloquent Defender of National Rights and National Independence."

27. Very rare memorial silver medalet. Crude bust to left by D. N. "Henry Clay." Rev., Dates of birth and death. "In Memory of Henry Clay. The Citizens of California."

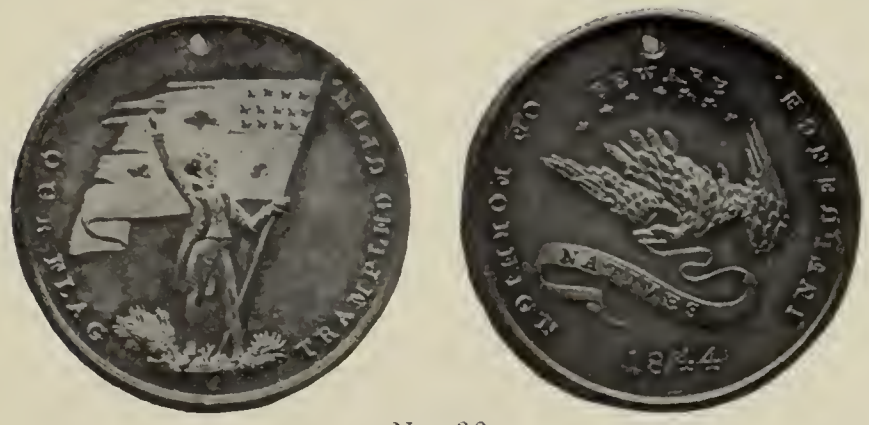
28. Bust to l. "In Memory of Henry Clay." Rev., "New Orleans, La., April 12th, 1860." Gilt, with loop attached.

29. Bust facing. "I Would Rather Be Right Than President." Rev., Eagle, "United States of America, 1848." This token shows his admirers struck medals for him for more than one of his Presidential campaigns.

No. 31.

30. Brass gilt button, the reverse showing the name of Scoville & Co., a firm of button-makers located at Waterbury, Conn.

31. Homely bust by Leonard. Rev., Shipping scene. "Henry Clay, the



No. 32.

Champion of a Protective Tariff."

32. A pewter medal reading "Beware of Foreign Influence."